

**DEVELOPMENT OF A ASSESSMENT CENTER FOR THE POSITION  
OF FIRE INSPECTOR FOR THE ELK GROVE VILLAGE FIRE  
DEPARTMENT**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Elk Grove Village Fire Department is a full-time career fire department of 94 uniform personnel. Conversely, for over 20 years, the department's fire prevention program had been staffed by part-time, off-duty fire suppression personnel.

In 1997, the part-time fire inspector positions were replaced with full-time civilian positions. This created the problem of identifying qualified candidates and use of an assessment center testing system appeared to be beneficial to that end. Lacking knowledge or experience in assessment centers, this research effort was to review information on fire inspector assessment centers and apply the information as necessary.

The research employed evaluative, historical and action research to determine; a) whether the position requires an assessment center; b) what is the current school of thought concerning assessment centers for the position; c) what assessment center materials were available for use and; d) if need be, what form of assessment center should be used.

The principal research procedure was to review literature covering fire service assessment centers with emphasis on the position of fire inspector. The field research consisted of discussions with fire department officials within the Chicago metropolitan area.

The results of the research effort revealed an adequate amount of historical background information and examples of assessment centers in use by fire department promotional tests. The major findings are assessment centers are very

useful as promotional tools, but rarely used for entrance level positions. The research revealed no information on fire inspector assessment centers, which was supported by the finding that assessment centers are not used by Chicago metropolitan fire departments for the position of fire inspector.

It is recommended that fire departments use assessment centers to qualify people for fire inspector positions. However, the absence of available fire inspector assessment centers, may require fire departments to develop a customized assessment center method for it's own use.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract .....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Background and Significance.....	8
Literature Review.....	14
Procedures.....	19
Assumptions and Limitations.....	20
Results.....	21
Discussion.....	24
Recommendations.....	26
Reference List.....	28
Appendix A – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Position Description	
Appendix B – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center - Fire Inspector Assessment Battery	
Appendix C – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center – Fire Inspector Written Test	
Appendix D – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center – Fire Prevention Code Written Test	
Appendix E. – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center – Candidate Oral Interview Question Form	
Appendix F – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center – Evaluators Score Sheet	
Appendix G – Elk Grove Village Fire Inspector Assessment Center – Candidate Score Sheet	

## INTRODUCTION

Elk Grove Village, Illinois, is a 10.9 square mile, medium sized residential/industrial community of approximately 32,000 residents and 50,000 business/industrial residents. Located on the far northwest corner of the City of Chicago; the city and Village are intersected by a major state toll road, sometimes known as the “Golden Corridor”, that leads to the states far northwest corner. The toll road is called “Golden” because it is a major transportation corridor in and out of the city and provides many economic benefits to the communities it intersects. Elk Grove Village shares in this opportunity and has the distinction being one of states strongest economic municipalities because of not only its proximity to the city, but to O’Hare Airport and the Village’s expansive light industrial park. In fact, with its 3,600 industrial occupancies, the Village’s industrial park is Illinois’ second largest manufacturing community - second only to the City of Chicago.

When the Village was incorporated in 1954, the Elk Grove Village Fire Department began its service to the Village as an all-volunteer department. Over the years, the Village grew considerably as did its fire department that gradually converted from the all-volunteer department to a paid-on-call/career department beginning in 1966. By 1980, the volunteer/paid-on-call firefighter positions had been replaced with career positions and the fire department is now one of Illinois’ largest with ninety-four uniform personnel.

By 1996, the departments staffing and fire suppression capabilities grew in relationship with the Village, however, the department’s fire prevention organizational structure did not experience an equivalent increase in service

capability. The lack of equivalent service capability from the departments fire prevention division was especially critical to the Village's industrial and business community, which constantly require a significant amount of fire prevention effort to control fire incidents. The key to the issue was the means in which the fire prevention organization was staffed.

Staffing for the fire prevention division was through a limited number of part-time positions for off-duty fire suppression personnel. For several reasons, but mainly for budgetary purposes, this policy remained unchanged for over twenty years. Recently, statistical and performance reports indicated that the number of annual fire inspections conducted in the Village had shown a steady decline over several years. The decrease was primarily caused by the off-duty suppression personnel's failure to maintain regular working hours as fire inspectors. The inconsistent staffing and decrease in fire prevention services created the concern that the health and safety of the Village's residents and industrial employees was at risk to fire which was a situation deemed unacceptable by the Fire Chief.

In response to this knowledge, the Fire Chief presented to the Village President and Board of Trustees, his concerns about this situation and offered three options for their consideration to correct the situation. The recommendations consisted of; 1) a proposal to increase the number of off-duty suppression personnel and allow more suppression personnel to participate in the fire prevention effort; 2) to hire a private contractor to conduct fire inspections and remove the fire department from directly conducting fire inspections; or 3) to

create full-time civilian fire inspector positions. In the Fire Chief's opinion, the most effective and efficient option was to hire full-time civilian fire inspectors. Based on the data presented by the Fire Chief, the President and Board agreed and terminated the part-time positions and created full-time civilian Fire Inspectors positions in May of 1997.

To reverse the loss of the fire department's protective services to both the residential and industrial communities, the Present and Board of Trustees established annual goals to be achieved by the new fire inspectors. Their directive was that every special hazard occupancy (industrial occupancies that have a high risk to fire), institutional and multi-family occupancies were to be inspected annually. The remaining structures were to be inspected on a biennial basis. With the establishment of these goals came the problem of how to achieve them within the shortest possible time. The Fire Chief decided that to do so, only qualified and competent individuals should be hired to hold the new positions.

The hiring process began by writing a performance based position description written in the Village's established format and holding discussions with the other chief officers on how to develop a means to objectively measure an applicant's performance potential and fire prevention knowledge and skills prior to a job offer. It was at this point, the use of an assessment center was considered. Due to the lack of knowledge and experience in hiring civilian fire inspectors and use of an assessment center, came the direction that basic research into assessment centers was necessary.

The discussions generated the criteria on which the research was based and used evaluative, historical and action research methods to answer the following questions:

1. Does the position require an assessment center?
2. What assessment center systems or methods are currently available for the position?
3. If available, what form of assessment center s should be used?
4. If no assessment center is available, what form should be developed?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

### **New Demands for Performance**

With increasing demands for performance and accountability, it is essential that fire departments demonstrate the organizations ability to run smoothly and with employees that are productive (Ridgeway, 1987). Also, according to Ridgeway (1987), if a department is to survive in today's litigious environment it must be able to document the level and quality of service it provides to the community with due concern given to court decisions concerning discrimination, incompetence and negligence in personnel administration.

With these concerns in mind, it is important to note at this point that fire departments within the State of Illinois have traditionally provided fire protective services primarily by organizing standing armies of firefighters to combat fires. And, it is likely most remain fire suppression oriented. However, many



progressive fire departments within the state administer a well-organized and effective fire prevention effort within their communities.

These departments are building a performance record demonstrating fire prevention can be an effective and highly productive fire protective service. As a result, fire prevention is beginning to receive more attention from fire department administrators and local government officials. This attitude change is due to their increased awareness to the effectiveness of a fire prevention program in the delivery and cost of fire protection services to the public. They are also learning there is a very cost effective side benefit where the reduction in the number and severity of fires causes a reduction in the number and severity of firefighter injuries

While the increase in fire prevention efforts has advanced public fire protection within the state, no State of Illinois regulations exist mandating a quantifiable or qualitative minimum level of knowledge and skills for fire inspectors. This is not the case however, with emergency responders as certain aspects of a firefighter's knowledge, skills and performance have come under the mandated regulatory standards of the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL). Two examples of IDOL mandatory performance regulations issued within the past ten years are rules establishing performance and competency standards for responders who response to hazardous materials incidents and rescue operations from confined spaces.

These regulations have been promulgated in the interest of responder safety and force any Illinois fire department to comply with the standards if they

provide these services to the public. Failure to comply could place the fire department at risk to substantial fines from the IDOL. Even in the absence of IDOL mandated regulations; voluntary performance standards written by organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) can be used by fire departments in regulating the performance of fire and rescue personnel.

Many fire officials view both the mandatory and voluntary regulations as burdensome, expensive to comply with, and an unwanted intrusion into the operation of their fire department. Most will likely agree however, the standards also act to improve a fire department's operations and service to the community in addition to improving the working conditions (i.e., safety) of emergency response personnel.

A fire department's fire prevention services, although a different form of fire protective service to the community is, when compared to fire and rescue services, equally as important as its fire and rescue services. The primary difference between the two lies in the fact that fire inspectors make proactive efforts to prevent fires or minimizing the severity of fires when they occur. These actions require an in-direct and abstract approach to a communities fire protection, but are no less technical or demanding than fire and rescue operations.

It is understandable that the nature of fire and rescue operations mandate minimum performance standards to increase the safety of firefighters, however, a fire inspector contributes to the safety of firefighters by either preventing fires or minimizing a fire's size, intensity and effect. Fire inspectors therefore, may apply

a different set of knowledge and skills in the performance of their duties but are no less important than fire suppression forces, especially when one considers the impact that fire prevention efforts can have on improving the safety of firefighters. Smith (1991) emphasizes this point by stating “fire inspectors should be assigned to their positions and conduct fire inspections based solely upon their technical training, expertise and their ability to motivate people to convince property owners or occupants to maintain fire safe conditions.”

### **Fire Inspector Performance Standards**

A voluntary performance standard exists which can be applied to the position of fire inspector is the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) NFPA 1031 - Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspectors 1993 Edition. This standard, as with the other the other professional qualification standards the Association publishes, establishes specific job performance requirements for fire inspectors for conducting competent fire prevention services. Written as a consensus standard, the document establishes written intent and application of the standard by defining its performance criteria in Chapter 1 – Administration. It begins with "This standard identifies the professional levels of performance required for fire inspectors. It specifically identifies the job performance requirements necessary to perform as a fire inspector" (NFPA, 1993 p.5). The NFPA 1031 standard also states the standards intent to provide “clear and concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an

individual, when measured to the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire inspector (NFPA, 1993 p 5)".

The NFPA 1031 standard continues by stating, "the primary benefit of establishing national professional qualification standards is to provide..."a frame work of the job requirements for the fire service (NFPA, 1993 p 5)." Other benefits the document provides include "the enhancement of the profession, individual as well as organizational growth and development and standardization of practices (NFPA, 1993 p.5)". As such, NFPA 1031 provides a fire service administrator the necessary,

professional qualification standards (needed to) identify the minimum job performance requirements for specific fire services positions. The standards may be used for training design and evaluation, certification, measuring and critique on-the-job- performance, defining hiring practices, and setting organizational policies, procedures and goals (NFPA,1993 p. 5)."

The NFPA 1031 standard however, does not offer a performance appraisal instrument to evaluate and document a fire inspectors performance or a methodology for hiring fire inspectors. In fact, in section 1-2 Purpose, the standard specifically states "This standard does not address management responsibilities, nor is it the intent of this standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these minimum requirements." (NFPA, 1993 p. 5). This is interpreted to mean the NFPA 1031 standard recognizes that it is management's responsibility to manage the organization and not the authors of the standard (NFPA, 1993).

It is unfortunate that document provides direction to establish fire inspector performance based on nationally recognized fire inspector knowledge

and skills, yet offers no assistance in measuring the skills or effectiveness of a fire inspector. The standard is equally silent on a required methodology for hiring fire inspectors.

Elk Grove Village Fire Department implements all required mandatory performance standards largely because they have a positive impact on the department's operations and service delivery to the community. It follows that application of performance standards in other non-mandated activities such as fire prevention would also better serve the community. With the creation of the full-time fire inspector positions the department felt it had a responsibility to continue to apply any relevant standards to the fire inspector positions as a service to both the community and fire suppression forces. As such, the NFPA 1031 standard has been applied to the position by implementing its content into the positions performance based position description (Appendix A) and as a yardstick to determine the competency of candidates by the use of the assessment center method.

### **Strategic Management of Change**

The National Fire Academy course “Strategic Management of Change” presents several topics applicable to this research effort. A direct application of the course material was the need for the department to manage a significant change in how its fire prevention program is administered and the elimination of its inefficient and ineffective twenty-year old staffing structure. The primary concerns facing the department were the effect the change would have on the

organization and affected employees, as well as the methodology how fire inspectors would be hired.

Initiating and managing the change required considerable skill, as eliminating the long established part-time positions proved to be traumatic for those who had held the positions – some for several years. Nevertheless, the decision was based on the facts that the part-time staff was inefficient and could not maintain a consistent level of performance or service – a situation that could not be tolerated. Action was needed to correct the situation to protect the community from a clear lack of code enforcement services. The use of an assessment center for hiring for the new position of Fire Inspector was also a significant change from the past practice but demonstrated the administrations commitment to ensuring quality fire inspection services.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The history of assessment centers begins with researchers in the late 1800s (Maher, Michelson; 1992) developing techniques to provide an objective measurement of human abilities, problem solving, judgement and learning skills in mentally challenged persons. The results and techniques developed from the research spawned other scientists in the early 1900s to measure various aptitudes and skills for predicting job performance (Maher, Michelson, 1992) which, in turn were adapted by businesses to apply to supervisors in the attempt to validate their supervisor selection process. Likewise, other industrialists who reviewed the

studies recognized the need for further understanding of human abilities within the workplace and to began to search for ways and methods to “get as much labor out of the worker as possible” (Maher, Michelson, 1992 p. 11).

It was German psychologists during World War I that used the data from the previous studies to develop the assessment center method in search of ways to identify intellect, traits and abilities of German military officers to further the war effort. The focus of the German tests was on the military’s selection, training, organization and morale building for officers. The process turned out to be so successful that similar assessment centers were developed to include German postal, railway, police, and other civil-service-type positions (Maher, Michelson, 1992).

The American experience with assessment centers began in earnest during World War II with the development of the Assessment Center Method for selecting personnel to serve with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS hired Americans to conduct “spy” missions in Europe during World War II and the sensitivity of the position required the identification of personnel who were best suited to the role. Because the OSS Method contained very specific dimensions, job descriptions for the “spy” positions emerged which remains true today as a “properly developed assessment center always includes a job analysis of the position being targeted.” (Maher, Michelson, 1992)

In 1948, the Michigan Bell Telephone Company established one of the first business oriented assessment center programs modeled after the Office of Strategic Services Assessment Center Method. The program was intended to

predict which employees would make better managers, then tracking the manager's career to determine if the selection was appropriate. It was not originally intended as a promotional or selection tool (Maher, Michelson, 1992) but as a method to track the accuracy of the selection process. As time passed, other companies too, began to use assessment centers to act as a performance predictor for supervisors.

### **Assessment Center Design**

According to Tielsch and Whiesenand (1979) an assessment center is a “comprehensive and in depth situation based method for improving a manager's accuracy in evaluating the capabilities of existing or potential staff”. An assessment center therefore, is not a place as the name suggests, but a systematic procedure with definite requirements for evaluating a candidate's skills and abilities prior to hiring or promotion. A more accurate term to describe the assessment center process would be to use “assessment center method” (Maher, Michelson, 1992).

According to Maher and Michelson, “An assessment center usually consists of a series of simulation exercises to identify a candidate's competency to perform the job for which he is being tested (1992 p.15).” Accordingly, these simulations are “a reality-oriented demonstration of required job-related skills which, in turn, must be validated and observable process for generating behavior exposing skills to trained observers (Tielsch, Whisenand, 1979 p. 24).”



Because of the popularity of the assessment center method and to further the process, an informal group of assessment center specialists periodically organizes international conferences to issue a document entitled “The Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations” (Maher, Michelson’ 1992). The document establishes the essential elements of the assessment center method and issues recommended guidelines. According the latest edition of the Guidelines, an assessment center consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs that consist of the following elements (Maher, Michelson, 1992):

1. Multiple trained assessors (observer) and techniques are used to evaluate the performance of each candidate for hire or promotion.
2. Judgements about the candidate’s behavior come from specifically developed assessment simulations that are directly related to the position.
3. The judgements from the assessors are pooled in a meeting among the assessors or by a statistical integration process.

The common assessment center method used by fire departments to test candidates for upper management positions consists of four tests. The first is a written test to measure a candidate’s accumulated knowledge of technical and procedures. The second is an “in-basket” exercise is to measure a candidates ability to process written projects by prioritizing, written communication skills, delegating authority, planning and organizing under time and pressure constraints. The third and final is a fire simulation exercise to determine the candidate’s

incident management and decision-making skills and a conflict resolution exercise (Kuirski 1990).

Tests that simulate actual job situations the candidate would likely face such as fire or conflict resolution simulations, require the use of objective assessors to observe and evaluate the candidate's skills and abilities. The selection of assessors becomes one of the most critical aspects of the assessment center method. In fire service applications, the more common practice is to use assessors from the same fire service background and rank that is one or more levels higher than that being tested for (Maher, Michelson, 1992).

Assessor training is one of the more important features of the Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations and according to Maher and Michelson (1992), is the one aspect of assessment center use in the public sector that is lacking. In fact, the Guidelines document recommends two days of assessor training should be provided for every day of candidate training. The assessor training allows the assessors to build and become proficient in observational skills to prepare for the assessment center, and equally important, to allow the sponsors of the assessment center to observe the skills of the assessors to adequately measure a candidates performance (Maher, Michelson, 1992).

### **Developing an Assessment Center**

Assessment centers can be used to evaluate candidates for multiple reasons. The most predominate use in the fire service is for promotional purposes. Additional reasons include entry into a position or evaluating the

effectiveness of training programs or personnel development (Neidig 1988).

According to Pamela and Richard Neidig (1988) a well-constructed assessment center should contain the following elements:

1. Defined purpose and objectives
2. Organizational support
3. Determination of critical abilities and relevant exercises
4. Development of measurement exercises
5. Selection and training of assessors
6. Selection of the assessment center site
7. Conducting the assessment center
8. Completing assessment center reports and pool information
9. Utilization of the results of the assessment center
10. Provide feedback to candidates
11. Evaluate the assessment center

## **PROCEDURES**

The desired outcome of this research was to determine if an assessment center method was a viable means to select persons for the position of fire inspector and what methods, if any, were available for use. The research was evaluative and historical to be able to understand; 1) Whether the position requires an assessment center for pre-employment assessment of an applicant; 2) What is the current school of thought concerning assessment centers for the

position; 3) What assessment center materials were available for use and; 4) What form of assessment should be used. The data reviewed and presented in this research paper was based upon the writings of knowledgeable authors in the field of fire service assessment centers and discussions with fire officials within the Chicago metropolitan area who have similar organizations to the Elk Grove Village Fire Department.

## **ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

The large majority of the research information concentrated on the historical and current assessment center methods used in promotional testing for fire service supervisory positions. It is assumed the use of the information served to identify the essential components of an assessment center for the position of fire inspector. It is also assumed that use of the information and the experiences provided from other Chicago metropolitan area fire departments would serve the needs of the Elk Grove Village Fire Department because the selected organizations share similar organizational, geographical and economic conditions.

The research revealed information that private consultants are available to design and administer customized assessment centers for organizations that have the ability to pay for or purchase their services. However, no consultants were contacted during the research effort making the results limited because of it. The absence of consultant input was due to the lack of funds to pay the consultant's fees.

Also, a limiting effect is over the fact that the Elk Grove Village fire inspector position description (Appendix A) contains knowledge and skill levels pertaining to pre-fire planning and fire investigations which the applicants were not tested for. These are skills considered secondary to the position and could be easily learned after a qualified applicant was hired.

## **RESULTS**

### Answers to Research Questions

#### **Research Question 1. Does the position require the use of an assessment center?**

The Elk Grove Village Fire Department's staffing change from using career fire suppression personnel as part-time fire inspectors to a full-time civilian staff created the administrative problem of selecting a means to identify qualified people to hold the positions. This need was the result of the Village President's and Board of Trustee's mandate for measurable performance requirements.

The literature clearly supports the concept of using assessment centers for the evaluation of an applicant's ability to perform the job requirements and responsibilities for technical positions such as fire officers. Unfortunately, the literature only briefly revealed the value of using assessment centers for entry level positions or other employment purposes such as evaluating the effectiveness of training programs and for personnel development for existing employees. Nevertheless, both findings validate the department's conclusion that applying an

assessment center for the newly created positions would be beneficial for the department. Therefore, the effort to use or create an assessment center was implemented.

Although no fire inspector assessment center information could be found, the literature revealed that a successful assessment center developed “in-house” are possible as was reported by other departments that had constructed assessment centers for promotional exams (Purdy and Filer 1980; Harless and Baldwin 1991). Actual documented successes, as well as the information from the basic research, revealed the important elements of assessment center design which proved useful in the construction of the Elk Grove Village Fire Department’s assessment center for it’s Fire Inspector positions.

**Research Question 2. What assessment center systems or methods are currently available?**

The first research effort to determine the answer to this question centered on the use of assessment centers used either nationally (as reported in the literature) or by other Chicago metropolitan fire departments. Failing to uncover national experiences, the first resource reviewed was the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association’s 1997 Membership Directory. The Association has over 200 member and research into these fire departments revealed that only ten have communities and organizational make-up similar to the Elk Grove Village. Of these ten, all assign fire inspection duties to career fire officers and firefighters (i.e., reassign them from suppression duties and place them within the fire

prevention division on a full-time basis) (Jackson, L., personal interview, July 12, 1997).

**Research Question 3. If available, what form or forms of assessment center performance test(s) should be used?**

The research revealed no fire inspector assessment centers and only generic assessment centers methodology was available (Yeager 1986). Example assessment centers available for review consisted of assessing supervisory knowledge and skill performance assessments and were not considered applicable to the fire inspector position. This situation placed the department in the position of having to develop a customized assessment center for the position.

**Research Question 4. If no pre-written assessment center is available, what form should be developed?**

Following the recommended procedures from the research information, the assessment center used four tests. The first test was a written assessment battery which four elements, a Telephone Inquiry, Letter Writing, Work Traits Identification, Code Enforcement Skills, and Work Scheduling (Appendix B) that was mailed to the applicant and turned in on the day of the written exam (Appendix C).

The written exam consisted of eighty-seven standard true-false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions covering subjects such as principles of combustion and fire cause determination, building construction, occupancy classifications and means of egress, fire protection and water supply systems, plan

review, and hazardous materials. A twelve question test over the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) National Fire Prevention Code (Appendix D) was also included.

If the applicant received a satisfactory grade of 70 per cent or greater, he (no female applications were received) was invited to an oral interview that was conducted by a panel of three fire prevention experts recruited from local fire departments. The panel or assessors had a standardized Evaluators Score Sheet (Appendix F) that directly correlated to the interview questions. Each of the applicant's were observed and their answers scored by the assessors using a one to five scale (one being the poorest performance – five the best). A blank space was provided on the form for the assessor comments to allow the assessor to explain the reason for the score given. The final component of the center was a personal evaluation (Appendix G) from the assessor that was a rating of the applicant's skills and abilities.

## **DISCUSSION**

The literature clearly communicated the value of assessment centers to pre- qualify applicants for fire department positions requiring higher levels of knowledge and skill. However, the literature only supported their use in promotional tests for fire officer positions and did not provide example assessment centers, or recommendations, for the position of fire inspector.

It had to be inferred that fire inspectors, because of their role and responsibilities for public and firefighter safety, should be held to a higher



standard of skills and knowledge. This was based on the content of NFPA 1031 and the value of the adopted minimum life and fire safety codes within a community is entirely dependent upon the level and quality of enforcement. Fire inspectors charged with enforcement powers should readily demonstrate their commitment to the code enforcement process by possessing the necessary knowledge and skills.

As the search for a readily available and useable assessment center position of fire inspector proved futile, it therefore became necessary to develop a testing process specifically for the position. Using the performance based job description (Appendix A) and the responsibility of conducting inspections for fire and safety code compliance activities within residential (multi-family), commercial, industrial and institutional structures, efficient file management, technical report writing, and computer skills, the assessment center was devised and implemented into the candidate selection process.

The in-house development of the assessment center method proved successful in that several applicants rose above all others who were subsequently hired. The experience gained from this experience underscores the value of testing applicants for technical positions such as Fire Inspector. In constructing the assessment center the guidelines recommended by Maher and Michaelson (1992) were followed as closely as possible.

However, due to time constraints and need to hire people immediately, the assessment center devised may not be a true form of an assessment center method if it were to be compared to the Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for

Assessment Center Operations promulgated by the International Congress on the Assessment Center Method as recommended by Maher and Michaelson (1992). This is because some elements of the Guidelines were not included in the final product. In spite of this, it is felt that this experience was very valuable in that several highly qualified people were identified by use of the assessment center and subsequently hired. To illustrate the quality of the people the assessment center identified one of the individuals resigned shortly after being hired to accept the position of a full-time fire chief in another Chicago suburban fire department.

Also, when Lonnie Jackson, Executive Director of the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association learned of the Elk Grove Villages Fire Inspector Assessment Center (by agreement with the department) makes the assessment center available to any fire department that may wish to use it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a result of this experience it is recommended that assessment centers be considered and, where possible, used whenever it is necessary to pre-qualify job applicants for the position of fire inspector. This recommendation is largely based on assessment centers proven track record for their value as a promotional tool for fire administrators to use in promoting personnel to higher ranks fire departments. As fire officers are commonly promoted to higher positions of responsibility using the assessment center method, fire inspectors too should be held to a higher level of responsibility and accountability in providing fire

protective services to the community. This fact is compelling evidence justifying the use of an assessment center for identifying candidates for the position. Using an assessment center for fire inspectors proved valuable for the Elk Grove Village Fire Department.

It is also recommended that fire departments wishing to develop it's own in-house assessment center should use the latest edition of Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations issued by the International Congress on the Assessment Center Method as a guide.

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